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Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, October 24, 2008

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Mother arraigned in death of her 2-month-old son

Posted by Rex Hall Jr. | Kalamazoo Gazette October 24, 2008 11:30AM

KALAMAZOO -- An Oshtemo Township woman was arraigned Thursday in Kalamazoo County District Court on an open charge of murder in the death of her 2-month-old son, authorities said.

RELATED CONTENT

- [Oshtemo Township mother charged with murder in death of 2-month-old](#) infant son

Angela Yvonne Cooks, 35, is scheduled to be in court Nov. 5 for a hearing on evidence against her in the case, a district court official said. Cooks was being held Thursday without bond in the Kalamazoo County Jail.

Cooks was arrested Wednesday by Kalamazoo County sheriff's investigators on a warrant charging her in the Oct. 16 killing of Jeremiah Lee Gulley. Sheriff's deputies found Jeremiah after Cooks called police at 5:50 a.m. to her unit at Country Club Park Apartments on South Drake Road to report that an infant was unresponsive. The boy was taken to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Contact Rex Hall Jr. at rhall@kalamazoogazette.com or 388-7784.

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Man gets prison for abusing relative

Posted by [llupo](#) October 24, 2008 05:16AM



Michael L. Busman

MUSKEGON COUNTY — A 33-year-old Ravenna man has been sentenced to prison for two separate cases of abusing a family member who has handicaps.

Michael Lester Busman, 7665 Spaulding, was sentenced to prison Tuesday for one to two years each for two cases of third-degree vulnerable adult abuse and six months for aggravated domestic violence. All the sentences are to be served at the same time.

According to police, Busman was the caregiver for the victim, a 28-year-old woman who needs to use a wheelchair for all mobility. The woman also has another handicap.

Categories: [Muskegon County](#)

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Federal judge approves Michigan foster-care deal

10/24/2008, 12:28 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — A federal judge has approved a settlement aimed at improving Michigan's foster-care system.

The state will hire hundreds of people to ease the caseloads of workers who oversee children in foster care or in protective services.

U.S. District Judge Nancy Edmunds said Friday the agreement is, in her words, "fair, adequate and reasonable."

In 2006, a New York group called Children's Rights sued Michigan on behalf of 19,000 children. A former child-welfare official in Illinois reviewed the deaths of five foster children and found the lack of case workers put kids at risk.

Michigan's performance will be monitored by Kevin Ryan, former head of New Jersey's Department of Children and Families.

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More Child Support Being Collected

Posted: 4:37 PM Oct 23, 2008

Last Updated: 6:03 PM Oct 23, 2008

Reporter: John Tramontana

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[More Child Support Being Collected](#)

Find this article and see video at:

<http://www.wilx.com/home/headlines/33087454.html>

It's a system that's changed how child support is collected and distributed.

"The efficiency in terms of our customers getting their money quickly has just gone forward by leaps and bounds," said Marilyn Stephen, the director of the Michigan Office of Child Support. This is the headquarters of the Michigan State Disbursement Unit, a site that manages more than \$5 million per day in child support payments, amount \$1.5 billion per year.

"This operation processes the money out to families often within one day or two days at maximum. That's because this method cuts out the middle man. The unit handles the processing of thousands of checks each day, freeing up time for Friends of the Court in every county in the state.

"That automatically goes to the state disbursement unit. It doesn't even come through us," said Ingham County Friend of the Court Shauna Dunnings.

She says the extra time has allowed investigators to more aggressively pursue those who aren't paying. It's helped Ingham County collect more than 60% of all child support owed.

"It's very significant. I don't think 100% of our population in Lansing is working so it would be difficult to collect support at the 100% level."

And for those who are working, there are other payment options. The state can deduct the amount right out of your paycheck....with little worker for employers.

"Once it's in the system it just happens automatically," said Thom Bowles, payroll manager of Kalamazoo-based Kazoo Inc. "You don't have to worry about it. The only time it doesn't happen is if that employee doesn't work."

And while the disbursement unit has helped to collect more money, there's still more out there. "The numbers are good but they're not great," Stephen warned. "I don't think any of us will rest until every single child in Michigan receives the support they're entitled to."



Child Support Programs in Michigan

October 23, 2008 - 4:51PM

Several Michigan employers are partnering up with the state to ensure child support gets to those who need it.

Every child support program in Michigan is sharing their commitment to ensure the state's children get the child support they need for housing, food and clothing.

By using the income-withholding process, employers can ensure child support gets where it needs to be.

Marilyn Stephen of the Michigan Office of Child Support said, "It's a pretty painless way for parents to make sure that they're caring for their children financially."

The Michigan Department of Human Services says our state's child support program is considered one of the most efficient in the country, adding up to almost 1.5 billion dollars per year.

Demand for aid jumps in Jackson

Posted by Chris Gautz | Jackson Citizen Patriot October 24, 2008 09:30AM

Nearly 400 people a day walked into the Jackson County Department of Human Services office last month looking for help to keep the lights on or to keep the children fed.

Janice Adams, 35, of Jackson was among the many Thursday who visited the second floor of the state office building downtown.

She met with case manager Kael Meyer to discuss some recent paperwork and her search for a job.

Adams has been unemployed for three years, she said, per doctor's orders due to back problems. But she wants to go back to being a certified nursing assistant.

"I'd rather make my own money than have the state support me and my kids," she said. "But if my doctor says I can't work, what am I supposed to do?"

The job search has been slow, she said. Potential employers have been hesitant because of her lack of recent work history and her medical problems.

She is also in the midst of a divorce and has three teenage children, two of whom live with her and her disabled mother in a rented mobile home.

Adams receives about \$400 a month to feed her family, and about \$400 in cash assistance. Her monthly rent, not including utilities, is \$629.

Traffic into the Jackson DHS office has increased 15 percent over the past year, and DHS program manager Deb Kohl said they've seen many formerly middle-class men who have lost their jobs.

They also see many young mothers worried about eviction or utility shutoffs.

"It's hard to see that on a daily basis," said Tanda Reynolds, office director.

Case manager Michele Ambs said it can be difficult to deal with a steady stream of hard-luck stories.

"We know everyone is struggling," Ambs said. "It's stressful for everyone, the clients and the workers."

Ambs is responsible for 410 people.

They range from a 13-year old mother to a 72-year-old on food stamps and Medicaid.

Ambs, is one of 11 Jobs, Education & Training case managers who oversee cases involving cash assistance. There are about 40 case managers who handle everything else, including food stamps and Medicaid.

Reynolds said the numbers of those seeking food and medical assistance have grown every month since she began working there in February 2005.

Sharon Parks, president and CEO of The Michigan League for Human Services, a statewide advocacy and policy group for low-income residents, said requests for assistance are on the rise almost everywhere.

"It's clearly a reflection of the very, very difficult economic times we find ourselves in," she said.

Parks said the number of those receiving assistance would be even higher, except that the eligibility requirements are set low. To receive cash assistance, a family of three can't make more than \$810 a month. That level hasn't been changed in 18 years, Parks said, even though the cost of living has gone up.

"We clearly need to look at whether our safety net is doing what it's supposed to do, or are we leaving a lot of people out?" she said.

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October 24, 2008

Wal-Mart donates \$370,000 to feed state's hungry mouths

Money to be distributed based on poverty levels to 9 food banks

Kathleen Lavey
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Thursday was a bountiful day for nine regional food banks across Michigan: They'll share in a \$370,000 gift from the Wal-Mart Foundation.

"We didn't know it was coming. Wal-Mart gave money last year, but not a donation of this size," said Dave Karr, chair of the Food Bank Council of Michigan's board and director of the Mid-Michigan Food Bank. Wal-Mart gave \$75,000 last year.

The Food Bank Council will distribute the money to nine regional food banks across the state, based on a formula that takes poverty in the areas into account. Karr said the Mid-Michigan Food Bank's portion would serve about 75,000 meals this winter.

The regional food banks use donated money to buy food in bulk, which then is made available to church and community food pantries. The Mid-Michigan Food Bank serves about 200 area food pantries in seven counties: Ingham, Eaton, Clinton, Shiawassee, Gratiot, Isabella and Clare.

The Wal-Mart gift puts the group's annual Harvest Gathering fall fundraising effort at \$430,000 - \$30,000 over its original cash goal of \$400,000.

But organizers hope Wal-Mart's generosity will breed more.

The campaign continues until mid-November with a new cash goal of \$800,000. The Food Bank Council also hopes to collect 500,000 pounds of food.

The reason: need.

"It's just hyperspeed right now," Karr said. "The amount of food has doubled that we've shipped out to the pantry network."

Bob Leiby sees it first-hand.

In recent months, he and other volunteers who operate a mobile food pantry stop in Bath Township have served 90 to 105 Clinton County families.

In October, the number hit 130.

"That's a pretty significant jump," he said.

Many of them are seniors on fixed incomes or young families who accept the food to free money for gas, mortgage or utility payments, he said.

"I know some of them personally, and others talk to me," said Leiby, 73, a Meijer retiree. "This helps them get along for another couple of weeks."

Nick Infante, senior manager of public affairs for Wal-Mart, said the foundation's board wanted to make an impact where need is great.

"Hopefully, people continue to give and bring them even closer to \$800,000 or even \$1 million," he said.



Friday, October 24, 2008

Depressed economy wallops states

By Pamela M. Prah, Stateline.org Staff Writer

Note: story text edited; see entire story at

<http://www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=350497>

Staggered by turbulent financial markets and anxious about a rapidly slumping economy, many state governments are slashing their budgets, frantically trying to stay afloat.

After two years free of major fiscal worries, state policymakers in 2008 were hit by a triple-whammy: a Wall Street meltdown that made it more difficult and costly to borrow; a record number of home foreclosures that took a big bite out of tax revenues; and soaring oil and gas prices that squeezed budgets of all but the energy-producing states.

With calendar 2008 nearing an end, Stateline.org's annual state-by-state review of major accomplishments finds lawmakers girding for big spending cuts in 2009 and beyond. California and Massachusetts were so worried about paying their monthly bills in October they considered asking the federal government for loans.

Stateline.org has compiled state-by-state session summaries of the 48 legislatures that met this year. (Montana and North Dakota did not meet.) Michigan's review follows:

Michigan lawmakers this year avoided the drama and brinksmanship that briefly shut down state government in last year's budget fight. And they did it during a raucous time in Michigan politics.

The state's Democrats nearly lost their ability to seat delegates at their national convention. Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick (D) resigned amid scandal, after Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D) held hearings on whether to remove him. And House Speaker Andy Dillon (D) became the target of a recall campaign because he supported higher taxes enacted in last year's budget showdown.

The Democrat-controlled House and the Republican-controlled Senate passed a sweeping law to increase the state's use of clean and renewable energy. But the measure is controversial because it allows electric utilities to avoid market-based reforms, while letting the companies raise rates to pay for new production facilities.

At Granholm's urging, legislators offered more tax breaks for companies that bring their business to Michigan, which has been in a recession since 2001 and has one of the nation's highest unemployment rate (8.9 percent in August).

Also passed was a law giving Michigan the most generous film tax credits in the country, allowing movie makers to recover 40 percent of their in-state costs.

The state also agreed to the Great Lakes Compact, an eight-state pact set up to prevent communities outside the Great Lakes watershed from siphoning water from the area. Congress and President Bush approved the measure after all eight Great Lakes states endorsed it.

Lingering concerns remain about last year's overhaul of Michigan's tax structure, which reworked business taxes and hiked personal income taxes. The Senate voted in October to reduce the new business taxes, and Democrats said they would consider doing the same in the House but only if they can find a way to pay for it.

One benefit of the new revenue from the income tax hike for the state is that budget negotiations went relatively smoothly, despite the state's economic woes, as lawmakers boosted spending for transportation and schools.

Lawmakers will reconvene in Lansing after the November elections, when they'll likely decide whether to enact a statewide smoking ban. The Senate approved a measure that would prohibit smoking in public places including bars and casinos. But the House narrowly rejected the idea, because Detroit Democrats feared the ban would hurt private casinos in Detroit because the state's Native American casinos would not have to comply.

The legislators could also work on a deal to expand Cobo Hall in the heart of downtown and home of the Detroit Auto Show. Automakers complain the facility is too cramped and outdated to host the industry event.

—Daniel C. Vock



MICHIGAN REPORT

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REPORT NO. 206, VOLUME 47-- THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23 2008

UNEMPLOYMENT RISES IN MOST STATE LABOR MARKETS IN SEPTEMBER

Seasonally unadjusted unemployment rates increased in September in 11 of Michigan's 17 labor markets, according to figures released Thursday by the Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

However, total employment fell in virtually all the markets in September from October, the figures showed. Only in the Lansing-East Lansing area did the employment totals increase over the month.

And all the markets showed significant increases in unemployment from September 2007 to September 2008, with unemployment increases averaging median increases of 1.8 percentage points during that year.

The only real industry areas showing growth in employment during the month were education, which saw some 52,000 new workers as schools came back into session, and government, the figures said. Decreases in the manufacturing, leisure and hospitality, construction, trade and transportation services, business services and financial services largely offset those gains.

The Flint market had the highest unemployment rate at 10.8 percent, up from 10.5 percent in August.

The Ann Arbor market had the lowest jobless rate, at 6.5 percent, but that was up from 6.4 percent in August.

The Detroit-Warren-Livonia market saw a decline in the unemployment rate from August's 8.8 percent to 8.3 percent in September. That decrease is due, however, to the area's market dropping by some 31,000 workers between the months.

Other markets seeing drops in the jobless rate were Monroe (from 10 percent in August to 9.5 percent in September) and the Upper Peninsula (from 7.6 percent in August to 7.5 percent in September).

The markets were unchanged from August to September in Lansing-East Lansing (at 7.1 percent), Grand Rapids (at 7.4 percent) and Holland-Grand Haven (at 7.2 percent).

Among the counties, Mackinac County had the lowest rate at 5.1 percent in September with that still a popular month for tourism. Washtenaw County, which is typically the county with the lowest rate, ranked 8th overall with a jobless rate of 6.5 percent. Wayne County, the state's largest, had a jobless rate of 9.6 percent. And Baraga County had the state's highest unemployment rate at 12.4 percent.